

Conversation Starters

- What kind of family are you in right now?
- What are some of the challenges in this phase of family life?

Discuss

Regardless of what kind of family we are in there will always be conflict. Often times we can really mess up in how we handle that conflict. We tend (or at least want) to stuff it, give the “cold shoulder”, run away from it, or just lose it all together.

- Have you had any conflict recently?
- Do you tend to want to deal with it in one of the above ways?
- How has any experience handling conflict this way worked out?

The goal of handling conflict is to dissolve tension and lead to resolution. The Bible give us some great counsel on how we should be approaching conflict:

1. Go Directly (*Matthew 15:23-24; Ephesians 4:26 NLT*)
2. Go Privately (*Matthew 18:15 NLT*)
3. Begin with Affirmation (*Ephesians 4:29 GN*)
4. Monitor Your Mouth (*Proverbs 15:1 NLT*)
5. Look for What You Can Own (*1 John 1:8 NLT*)
6. Establish Specific Ways to Resolve the Conflict (*Hebrews 12:14 The Message*)
7. Reaffirm the Relationship (*1 Corinthians 13:5b; Colossians 3:13; James 5:16 NLT*)

- Have you ever approached conflict this way?
- Are any of these steps particularly challenging for you?

A healthy family is one that deals with conflict. It's not always easy, but necessary and well worth the effort. Some of the most important things you can say to your family are: 1) "I am sorry." 2) "I was wrong." 3) "Please forgive me."

"A man who refuses to admit his mistakes can never be successful. But if he confesses and forsakes them, he gets another chance." (Proverbs 28:13 LB)

- Have you ever experienced family conflict that went unresolved? How did that affect family life?
- What are some barriers that keep you from resolving conflict in a healthy way?
- Have you ever said any of these statements to a family member?

Next Steps

Conflict can be difficult, awkward, and hard...but the payoff of having healthy relationships and healthy families is worth any challenges to resolving it. Are there any unresolved conflicts in your life right now? Practice, on your own, resolving it using the above steps. Then, go to the person you are in conflict with to work it out.

Further Reflection

See Matthew 15:23-24; Ephesians 4:26; Matthew 18:15; Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 15:1; 1 John 1:8; Hebrews 12:14; 1 Corinthians 13:5b; Colossians 3:13; James 5:16; Proverbs 28:13.

Pray

God, thank you for the people around us. For our families, friends and other loved ones. We don't always express how important and loved everyone is to us, especially when there is conflict. Thank you for letting us know how we should resolve any differences and conflict, and how our attitude and heart should be towards each other. Help us to put these steps into practice as we move forward, and to see any opportunities we have now to resolve or correct any recent conflicts that we may have messed up.